

10am – 6pm Tuesday – Saturday
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Joanna Logue

Echo



King Street Gallery on William

29 November – 22 December 2022



May Snow, 2022, oil on linen, 126x130cm

Joanna Logue: Echoes

Jessica Skwire Routhier

In just a few years, Joanna Logue has had to change almost everything about her way of working. She is still and always will be a landscape painter, but where she once painted with oils, she now uses acrylics. She learned her craft in the bright and open landscapes of southeastern Australia, where she is from, but she now spends most of her time in the northeastern most corner of the United States, on Mount Desert Island, Maine, where everything from the vegetation, to the light, to the change of seasons is entirely different. The move to Maine was anticipated and carefully planned, but the switch from oils to acrylics was more abrupt. After developing health issues from the toxic properties of the oil paints, Logue changed materials essentially overnight. The new work gathered here is her first exhibition wholly in this new medium.

Mount Desert is a very specific kind of place. In the summer, its largest village of Bar Harbor draws tourists from all over the world. Some 3.5 million people visit nearby Acadia National Park each year to hike its trails and take in its unparalleled views. Apart from the crowds, the park is a landscape painter's dream—and in fact it has played an important role in American art history, beginning with Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church in the nineteenth century. And yet, when the visitors leave and the seasons change—and Logue marvels at how quickly and thoroughly they change in Maine—Mount Desert becomes a much quieter and more reclusive place. The summer sun and the brilliant autumn foliage that have inspired so many other artists, it turns out, are like a decorative scrim covering the

more raw, more dense, more challenging landscapes that capture Logue's attention.

"It's such a complicated and intricate landscape," says Logue, referring not to the spectacular, expansive vistas for which Acadia is best known but to the overlooked corners of the woods and marshes that are by contrast much more complex and changeable, more difficult to access both physically and intellectually. This, too, is part of the lineage of modern Maine landscape painting to which Logue now unexpectedly belongs. She had known of Marsden Hartley and Milton Avery before moving to Maine, but their landscapes have since become some of her strongest influences, as are contemporary Maine paintings by Lois Dodd, Alex Katz, and John Walker. She is fascinated by the balance between influence—of place, of other painters—and individuality. "How much of my way of seeing is influenced by what's gone before," she wonders, "or is it just my unique perception of the world?"

She begins her work with a hike out into the woods, sometimes just looking, sometimes with a camera in hand or the kit she uses to make gouache studies en plein air. "I'm loving this place with my eyes rather than my heart, unlike the emotional connection I have to the landscape at home," she says. "I've had to get out there and intensely investigate and observe to understand the nature of this landscape. As a result, my way of seeing and drawing has really improved." Back in the studio, she stores the photographs and gouaches in folders organized by theme and/or place

name: “Witch Hole,” “Snow – Eagle Lake,” etc. She will often create a more fully realized version of the composition on paper or cradled birch panel before addressing it on a larger scale. Once transposed, the work becomes more expressive in nature. The actual landscape will have changed by then—each week in coastal Maine is like its own miniature season—but it has also changed in Logue’s mind and in her rendering of it. The studies made from real places are departure points. “Then my visceral memory kicks in,” she says. “It’s about finding a balance between a spontaneous approach to mark-making and the formal preoccupations around building a painting.”

She uses her folders and studies as a kind of library of forms and marks and colors, and freely mixes those sources in her large-scale works, composed of heavily layered marks laid down with large brushes and a concrete trowel she describes as her “favorite tool.” “I pastiche myself,” she says, often literally cutting and pasting elements together, inverting and rearranging them to create new compositions. She describes her process as developing a “language” she can use as she works on as many as ten large canvases at a time, constantly returning to add another motif, another layer, or to edit what she has already done. The literary metaphor is applicable in more ways than one; she often finds herself “letting go of nice passages to enable the painting to work,” the equivalent of the writer’s mandate to “kill your darlings.” “The role of the artist is to recognize what is serving the painting and what isn’t,” she says.

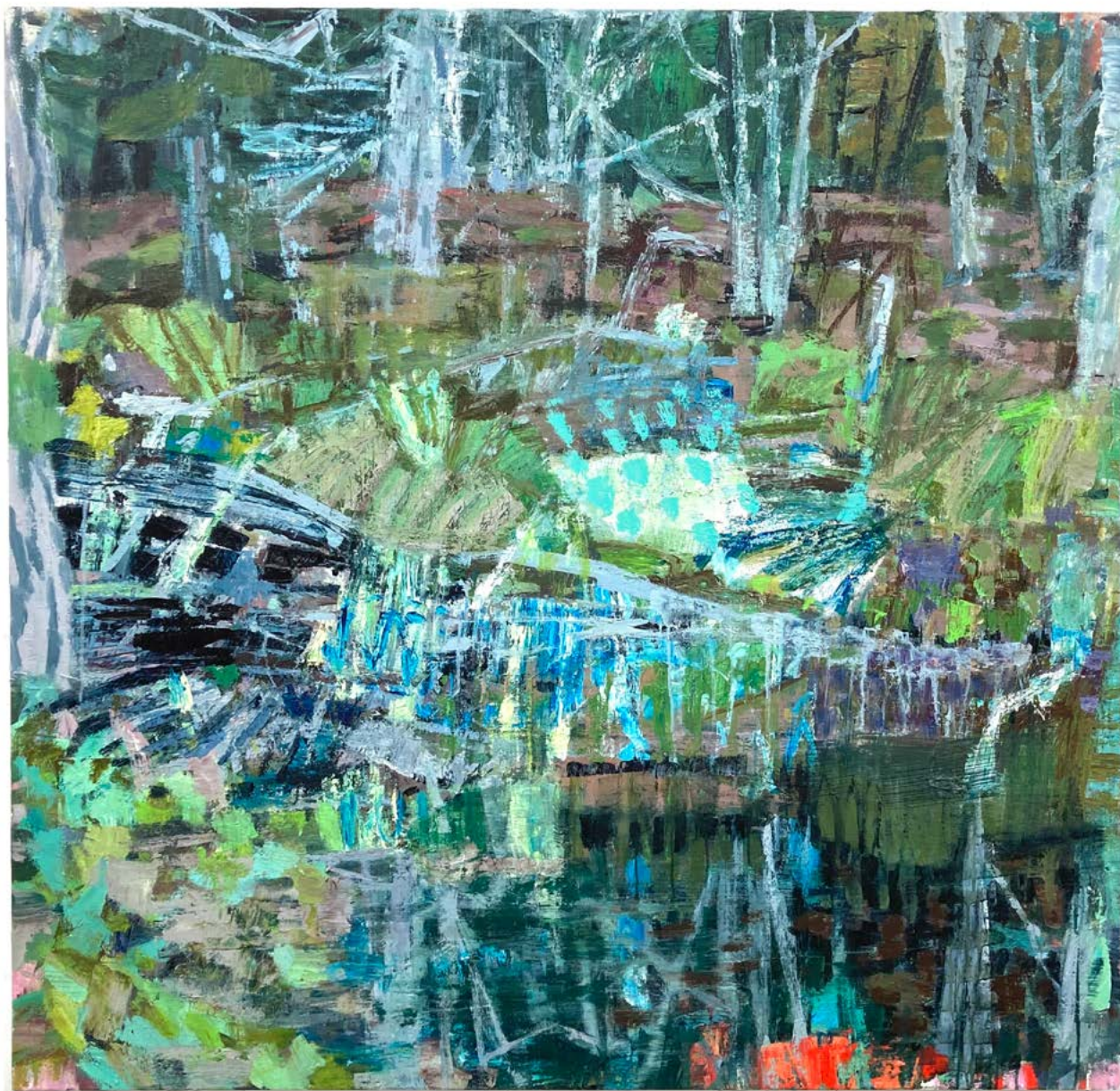
She also sees her paintings as analogous to poetry, in that they begin with an idea or an image that is already familiar in some sense but encourage the viewer to see it in a different way. *May Snow*, for instance, evokes a

late-season snowfall, where spring is already starting to burst through on the forest floor and around the rim of a vernal pool before the snow comes and complicates everything. What appears on canvas is not a literal rendering of an observed moment but an orchestration of abstracted motifs that stir up a memory of being in that kind of landscape, with all its visual and emotional complexities.

Is it just a coincidence that Logue is drawn to places with names like “Witch Hole” and “Breakneck Creek”? There is a certain depth and darkness to much of her work. She describes her *Wooded Trail* paintings as “spooky and mysterious.” Works like *Where the Birch Meets the Sea*, with its stand of slim white birches, have a kind of whimsical quality, a sense of both delight and possible danger. This is by design, Logue says, noting that her paintings have to be more than beautiful; they have to have something that stops and challenges the viewer. “My paintings need to be tough and innovative, but soft and seductive at the same time.”

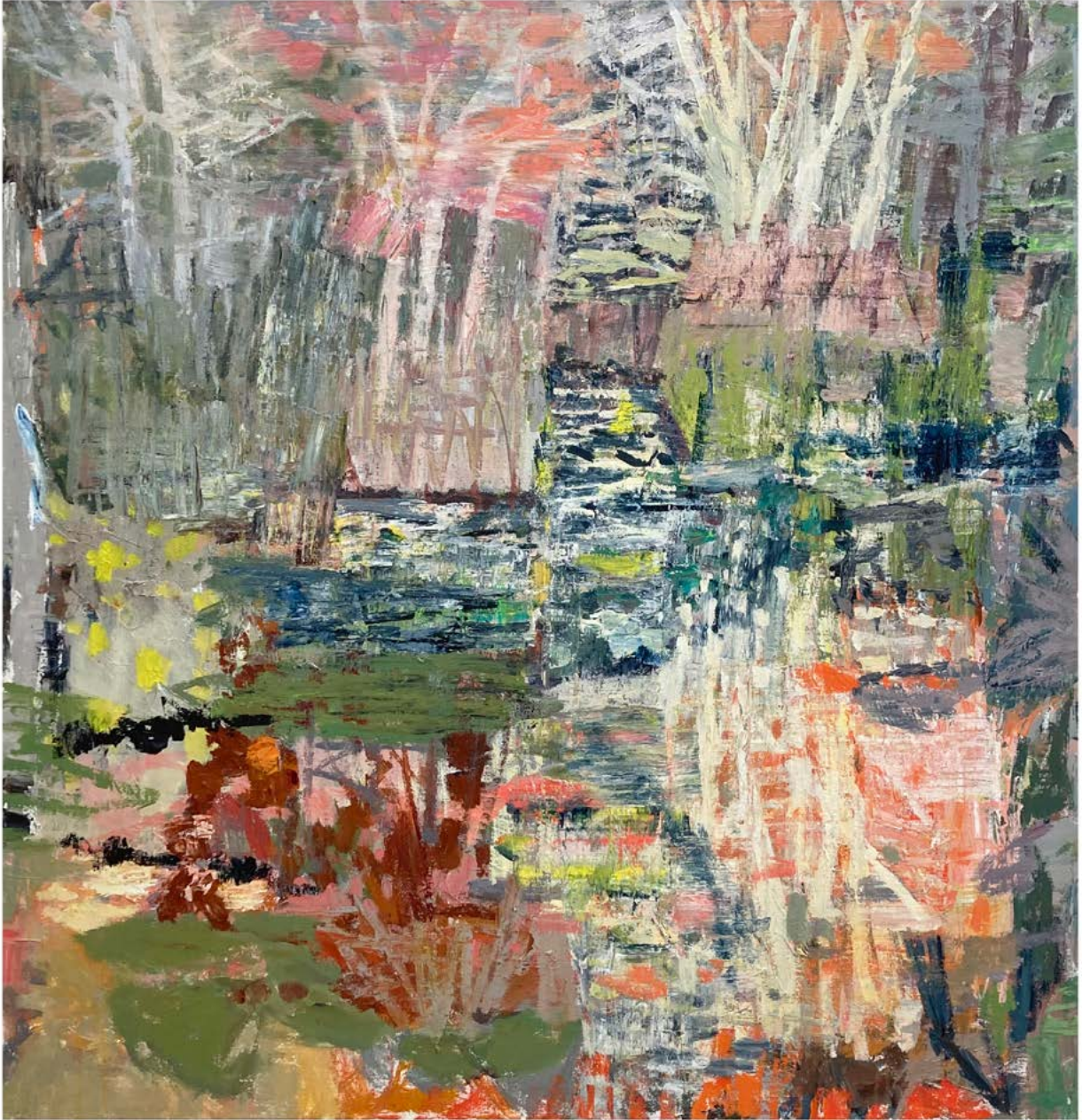
Logue chose the title “Echoes” primarily for formal reasons, referring to the compositional devices that appear and reappear—doubled, flipped, rotated, mirrored—throughout the work. The word itself, though, has some of the same mutability as those changeable marks: echoes of home, of dislocation, of influence, of past work, of real-world landscapes that exist only for a moment before they change forever, and then change again. The magic of Logue’s painting is how she renders something as elusive as those echoes.

Jessica Skwire Routhier is a regular contributor to *Antiques* and *The Arts Weekly* and the managing editor of *Panorama*, the journal of the Association of Historians of American Art.

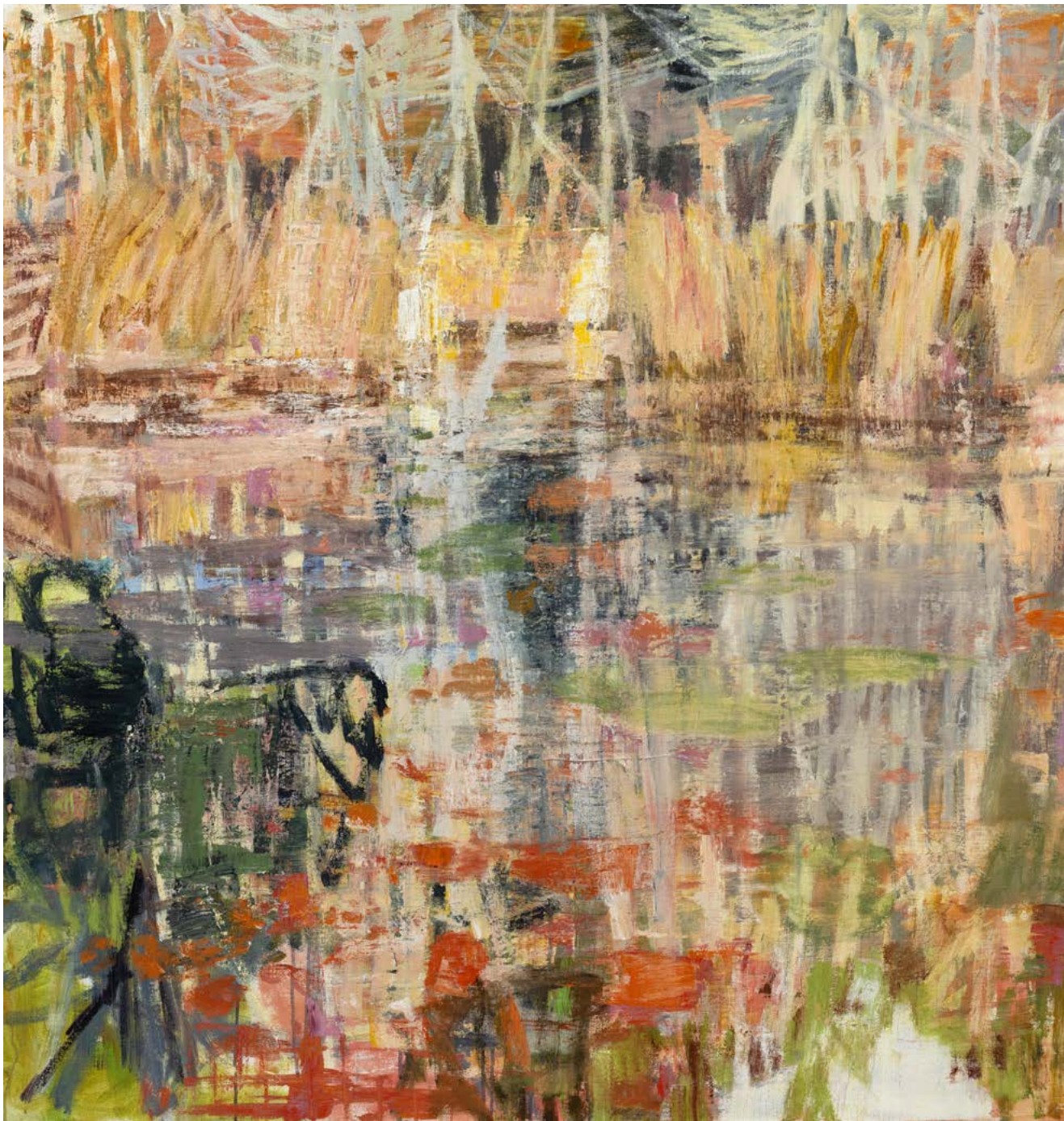


Mossy Trail I, 2022, acrylic on linen, 126x130cm





Marsh Song, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm





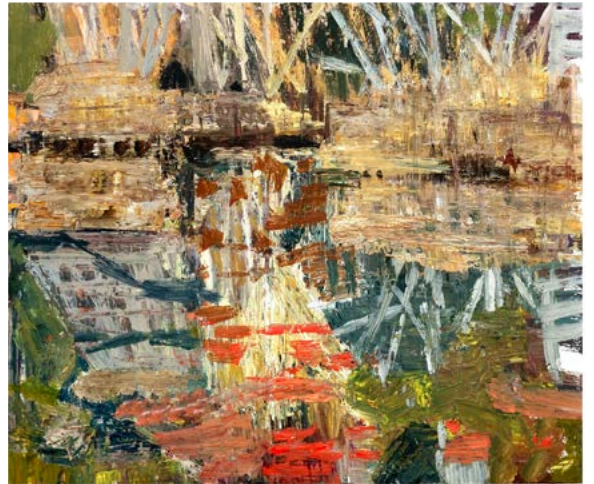
Marsh- Turtle Pond, 2022, acrylic on cradled birch, 50.5x61cm



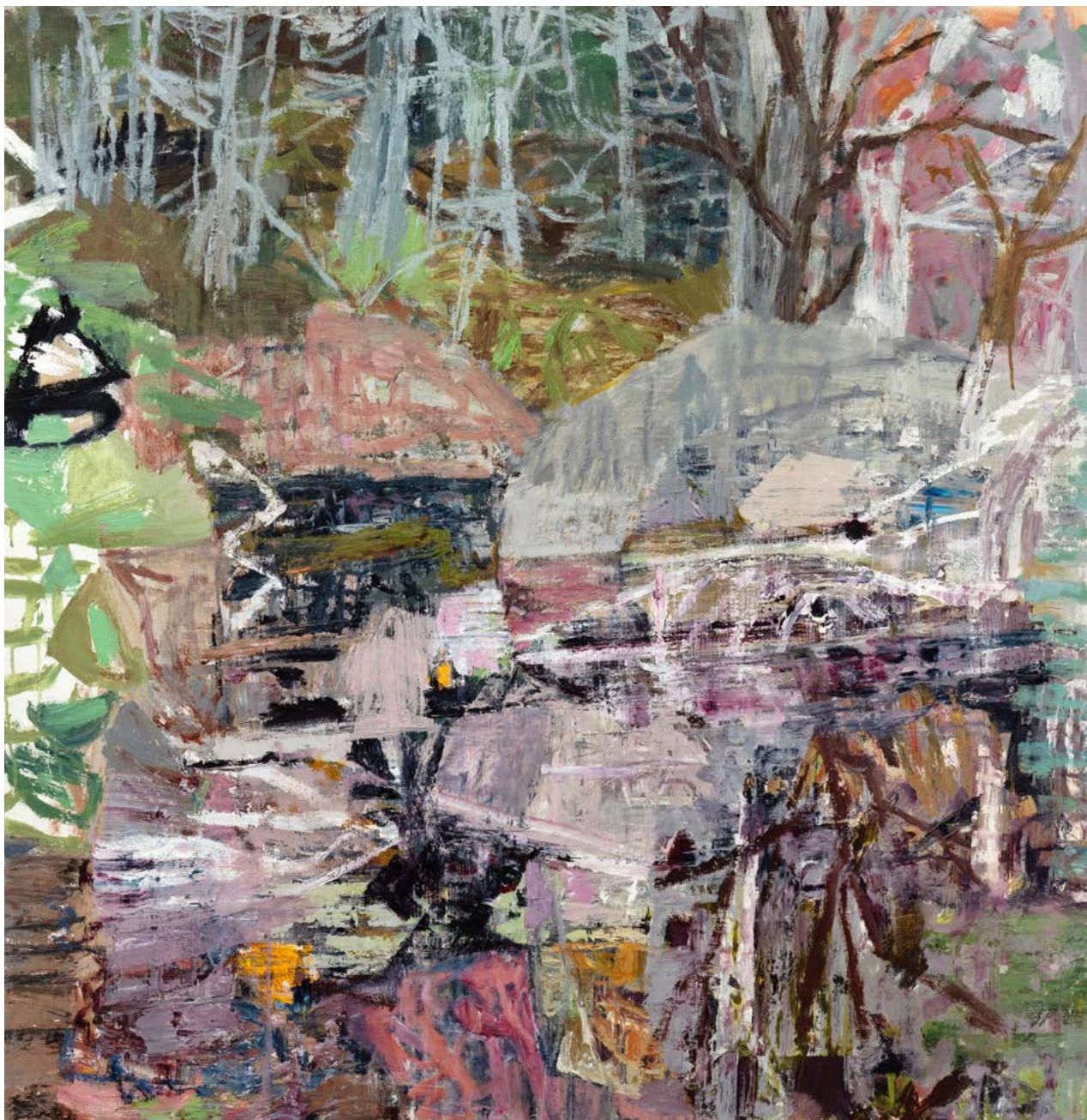
Marsh Acadia III, 2022, acrylic on cradled birch, 50.5x61cm



Pretty Marsh I, 2022, acrylic on cradled birch, 50.5x61cm



Pond's End, 2022, acrylic on cradled birch, 50.5x61cm

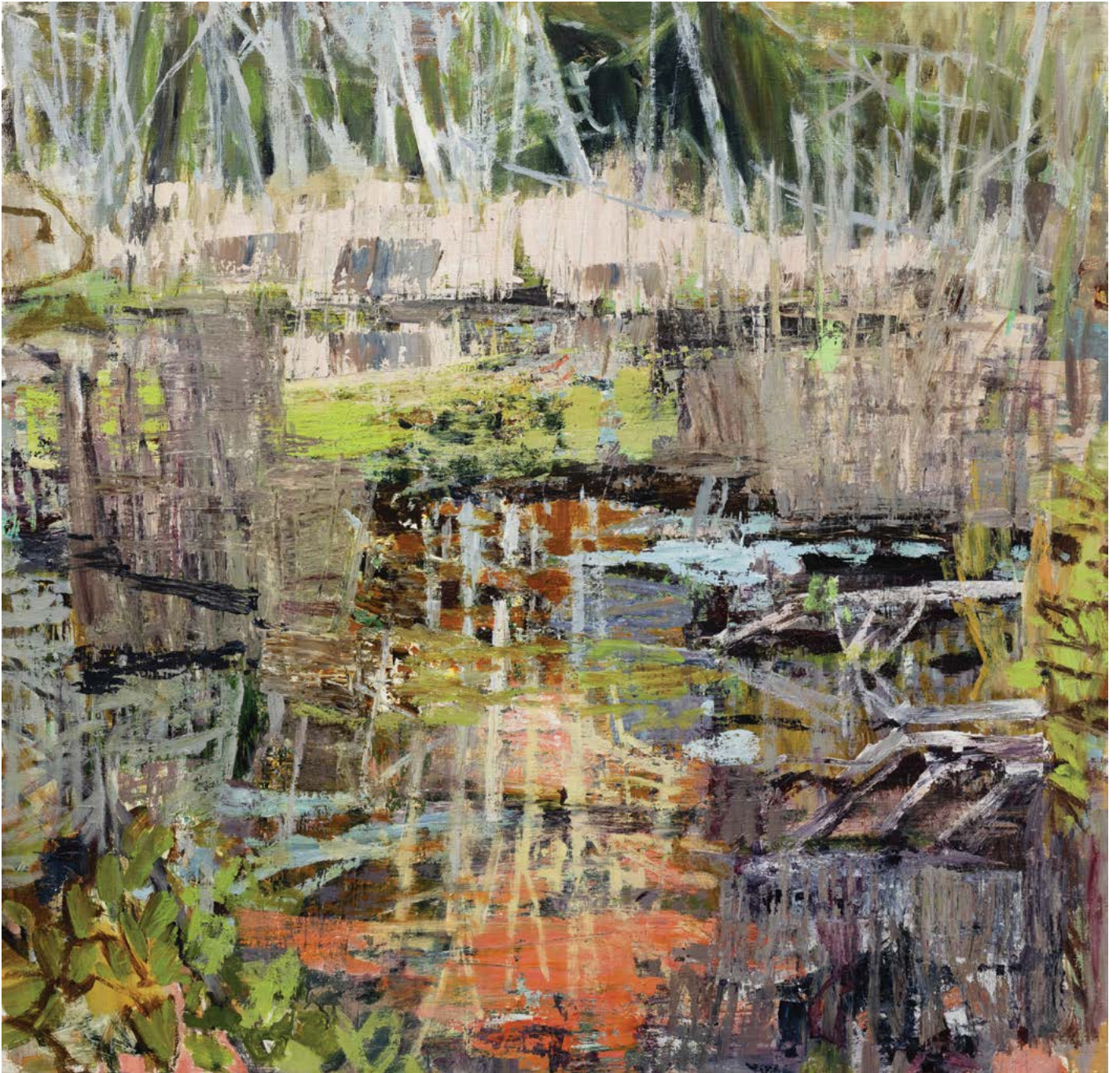


Granite Trail I, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm

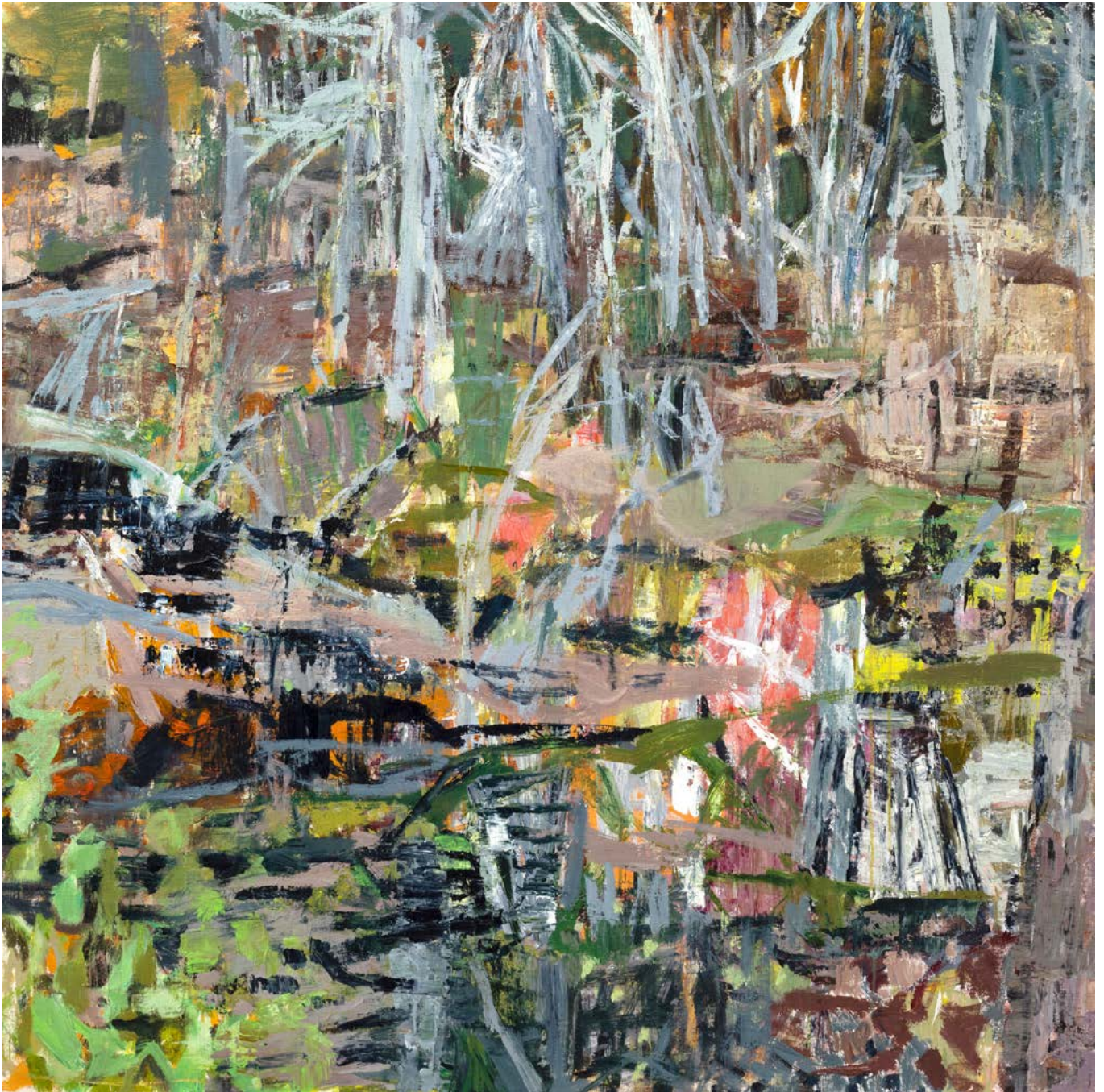




Granite Pool, 2022, oil on birch panel (diptych), 60.5x122cm



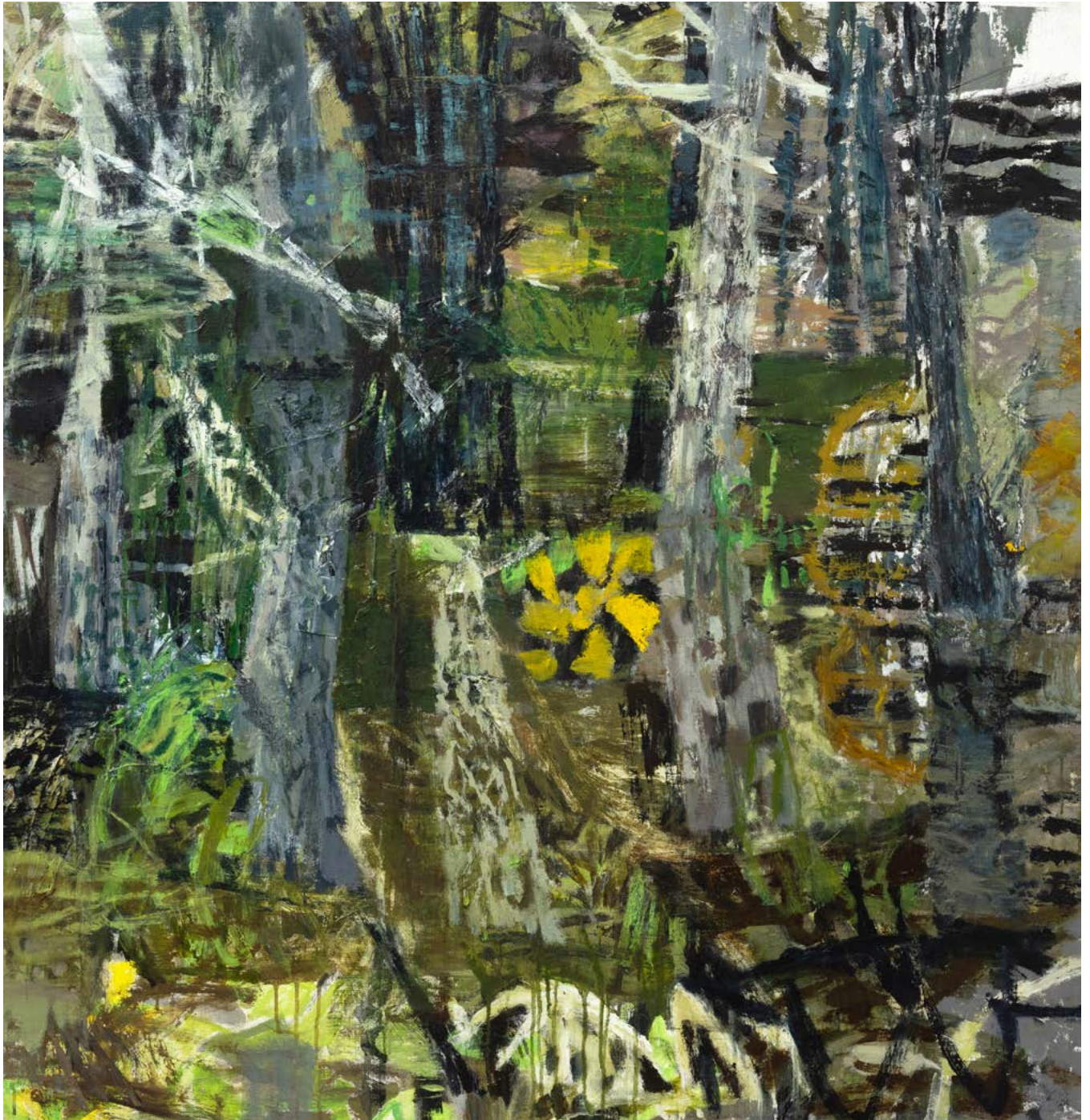
Pretty Marsh- Fall, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm

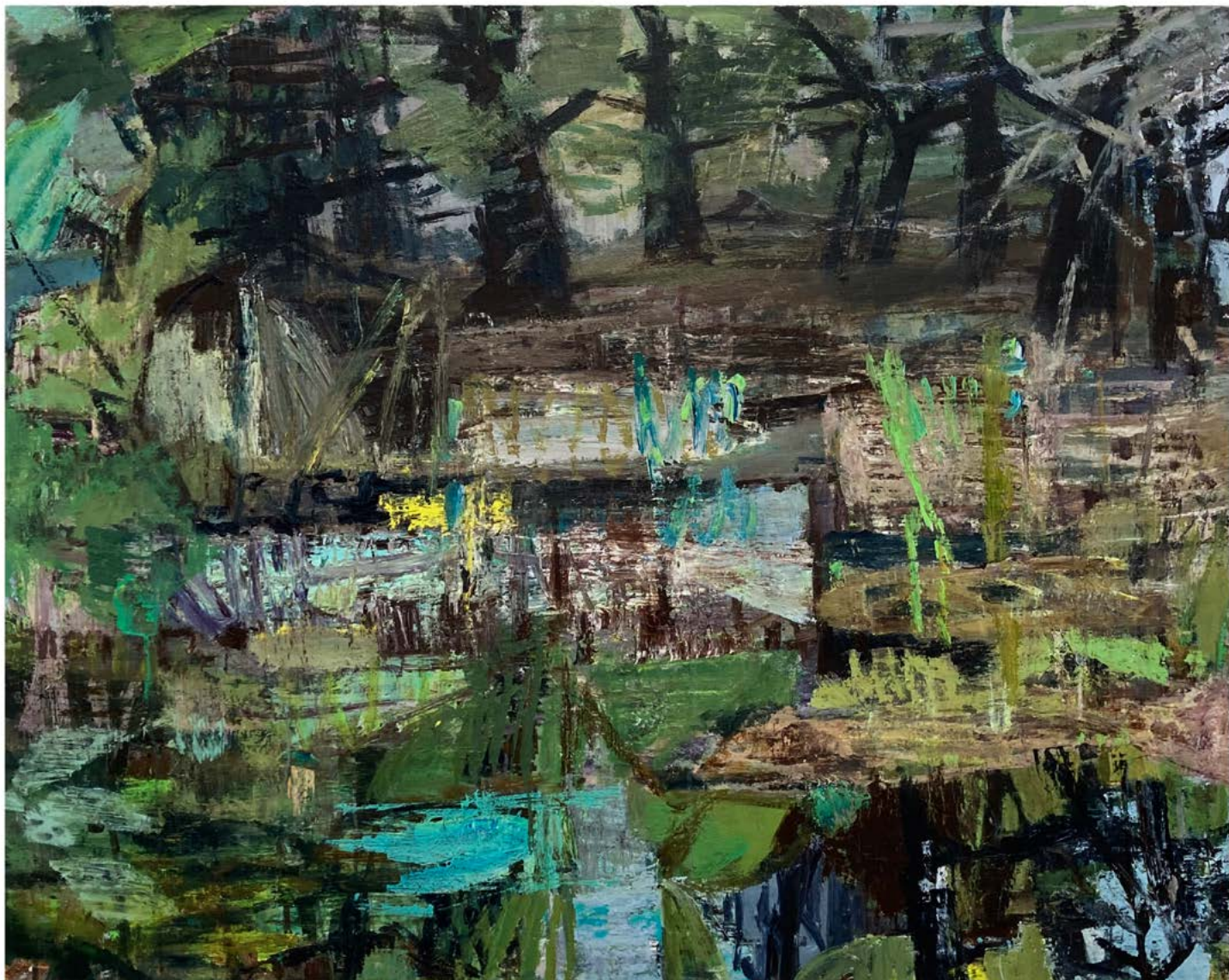


Wooded Trail, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm



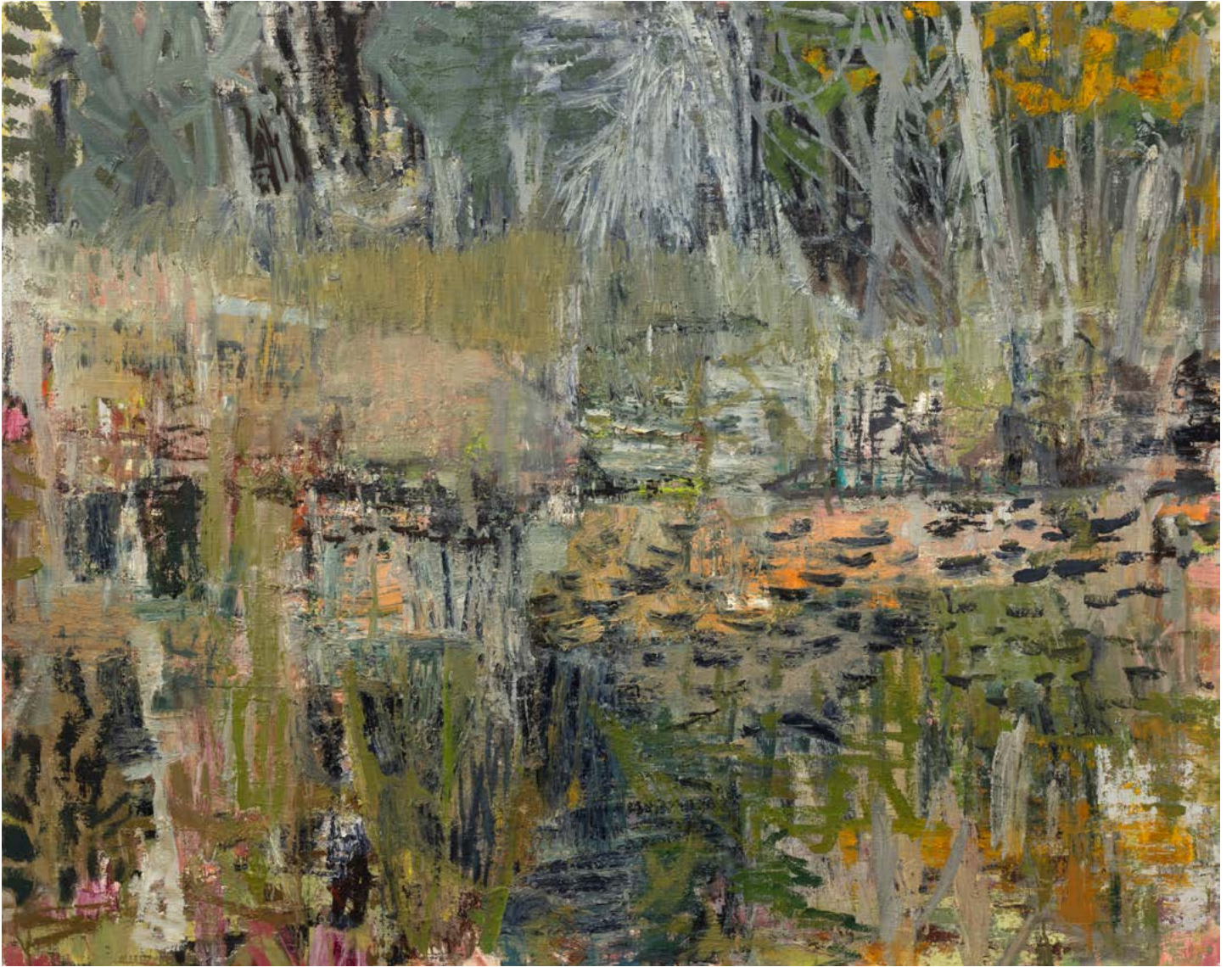
Granite Trail II, 2022, acrylic on linen, 100x126cm





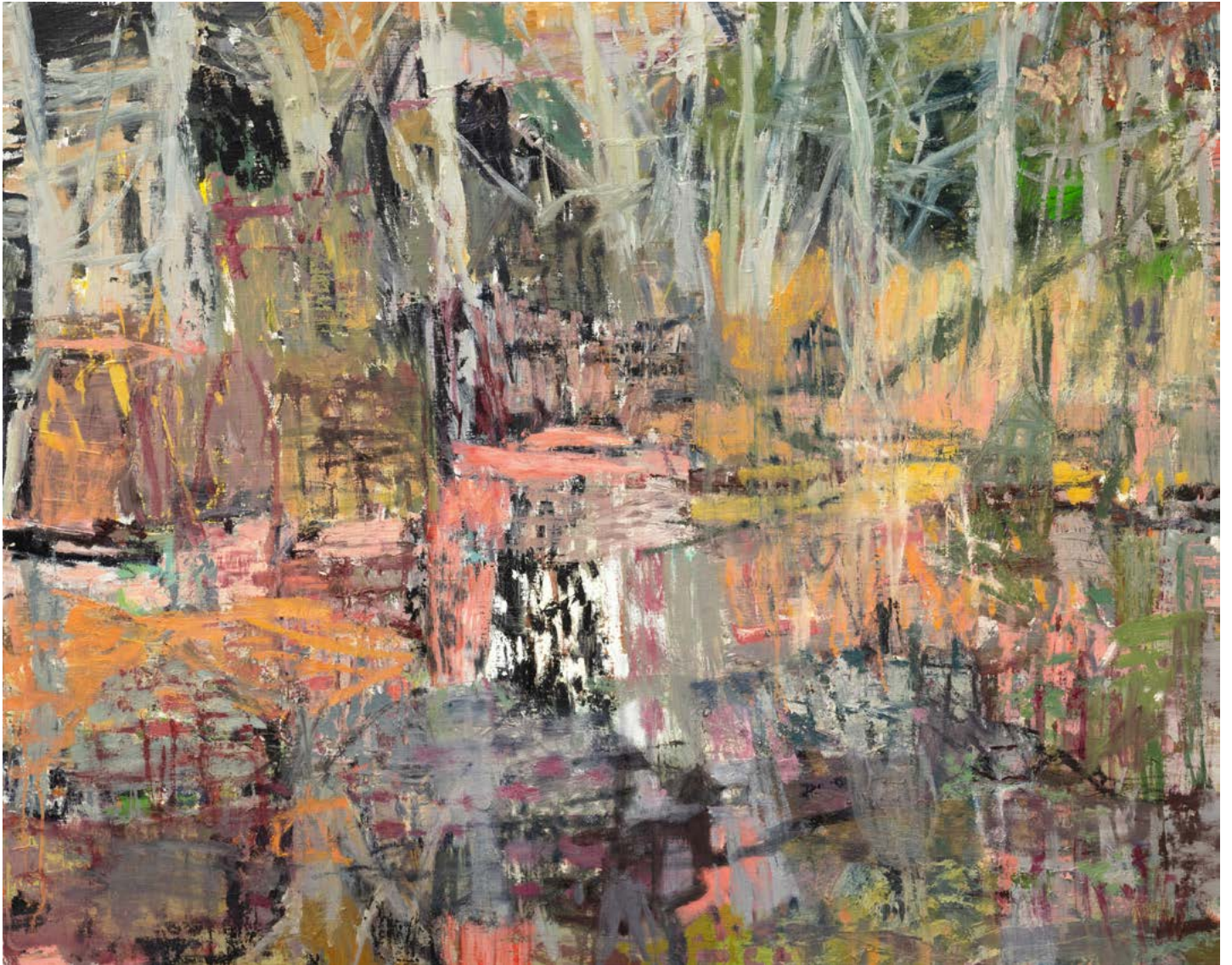
Marsh- Little Long Pond, 2022, acrylic on linen, 100x126cm



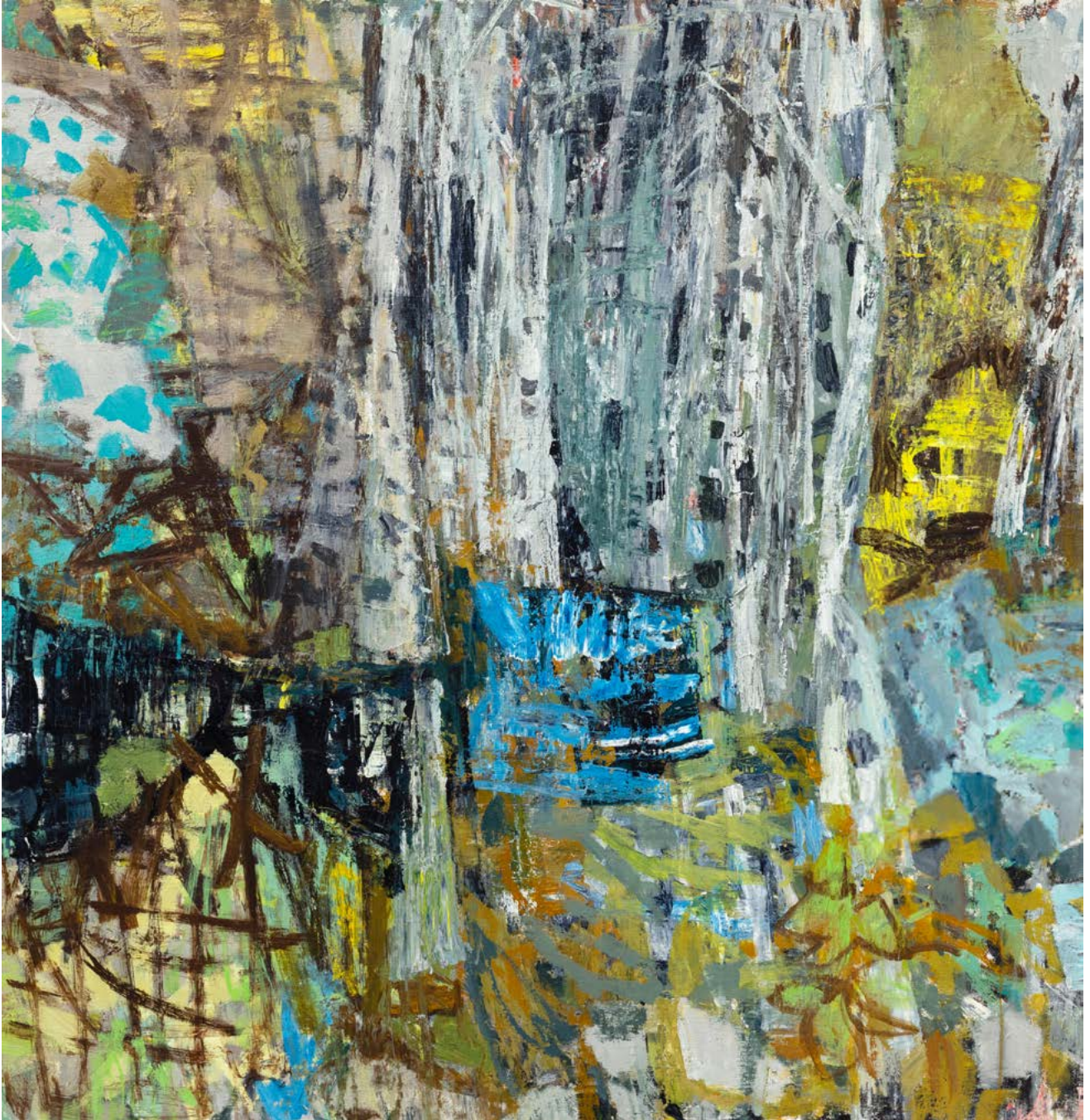




Cranberry Creek, 2022, acrylic on linen, 100x126cm



Marsh- Eagle Lake III, 2022, oil on linen, 100x126cm



Where the Birch Meets the Sea I, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm



Where the Birch Meets the Sea II, 2022, acrylic on linen, 130x126cm

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